

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

Snapshots from
the Safe Schools/
Healthy Students
Initiative

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports: Snapshots from the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative

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Special thanks to Christine Blaber, EdM; Jennifer Kitson, MS, EdS; and Cynthia Wright, EdD, for their guidance and review of this document.

The National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention at Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), provides technical assistance and training to Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) grantees. SS/HS grantees are funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports: Snapshots from the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative is available electronically on the National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention's website: <http://sshs.promoteprevent.org/publications-sshs/bestpractices>.

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Few would argue that the primary role of schools is to foster the healthy academic and social development of children. Indeed, when schools function as safe, positive learning environments, students and staff interact with respect and kindness, and students are supported to express their thoughts and ideas with confidence. But what happens when students' problem behaviors become so challenging that teachers can't teach? When disruptiveness and disrespect are the norm, and teachers and administrators spend the majority of their time on disciplinary issues?

We know that responding to student misbehavior with punishment alone (e.g., office referrals, loss of privileges, suspension, expulsion) is not the answer. In fact, isolating students who act out can lead them to feel alienated from their peers and teachers, disengage from school, and even drop out. Especially troublesome is that these types of sanctions disproportionately affect African American students¹ and students with emotional, behavioral, and learning disabilities.²

Research shows us that teaching positive behaviors to students of all ages and modeling and reinforcing those behaviors can lead to significant, favorable outcomes. Evidence-based, schoolwide programs that create an encouraging, supportive school climate, while mitigating and addressing negative behaviors,³ can have far-reaching benefits, such as fewer discipline referrals, lower suspension rates, and fewer classroom disturbances.^{4,5,6,7}

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is an evidence-based model that provides a schoolwide, systemic approach to preventing and improving problem behaviors and creating a positive school climate. Originally designed for students with special needs, PBIS has evolved to focus on establishing proactive, positive, and instructional policies to **create school environments that are safe, respectful, and conducive to learning**, while also managing student misbehavior and fostering student motivation.⁸

How PBIS Works

At its core, **PBIS is a framework for creating and enforcing schoolwide behavioral expectations.** Staff teach children to operationalize common PBIS guidelines, such as "be safe, be respectful, be responsible," by following posted rules such as "always walk in hallways" and "be a good listener." Communicating clear, consistent expectations about student behavior enables young people to know what is expected of them throughout the day.

Families and administrators walk into school buildings and notice a difference in the climate of the school. It's quiet and orderly, and kids can describe what it feels like to be responsible and respectful in the hallway and to feel safe in our school. That's when you know that the application has occurred, and you're changing to normative, expected behavior.

—Marian Sheridan, PBIS project administrator,
Fond du Lac School District

PBIS also creates behavioral management expectations for teachers and changes how they interact with students. School staff learn to praise and reward positive behaviors. For example, students can earn “PBIS coins,” which they can use for admission to school events, to purchase items at the school store, or trade for privileges such as free time. PBIS also gives staff a process for addressing problematic behaviors, helping with classroom management and discipline, and improving supports for students who need more specialized assistance.

From an operational standpoint, PBIS requires an investment of staff time, from district administration to building staff. Many schools employ the following PBIS model:

1. Districts support a **PBIS lead** who coordinates PBIS efforts and evaluation across the district, and supports PBIS teams at each school.
2. Schools identify staff members to participate in **school PBIS teams**, which plan and implement PBIS in the schools. Teams attend PBIS trainings so that members can learn to use data to determine how to adapt PBIS to meet the school’s strengths and needs.
3. Finally, **PBIS coaches** employed by the district help motivate teachers, staff, and students, reinforcing messages and behaviors and supporting PBIS implementation on an ongoing basis.

“Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a proactive systems approach to establishing the **behavioral supports and social culture** needed for **all students in a school to achieve social, emotional, and academic success.**”

—The Illinois PBIS Network

Key Characteristics of PBIS

PBIS has been successful as a long-term, sustainable initiative with lasting results because of several key features:

» **PBIS is a framework, not a program.** The PBIS framework integrates four key elements:⁹

1. *Using data* to guide decisions
2. *Measuring outcomes*
3. *Implementing practices* to achieve desired outcomes
4. *Creating systems* to support the implementation of these practices

The PBIS framework complements many other schoolwide interventions and can be integrated with academic, school health, and social-emotional learning programming.

» **PBIS approaches prevention at three levels:** universal, selective, and indicated. Schools may use any or all of the three tiers of prevention, based on their needs.

Tier 1: *Universal prevention* provides proactive, preventive interventions that teach all students behavioral expectations and pro-social skills.

Tier 2: *Selective prevention* focuses on at-risk students (typically 10 percent of the school population) and includes behavior planning and small-group counseling.

Tier 3: *Indicated prevention* addresses the students with the greatest need for behavior modification (typically 5 percent of the school population) and includes plans for individual students, such as school-based mental health services, individualized education plans, and wraparound care (i.e., community agencies coordinating services to provide comprehensive care to the child and family).

- » **PBIS supports school staff to change their behavior to positively influence students.** PBIS's initial focus is on teaching school personnel to change the way they interact with students. Teachers and other school staff learn how to create, communicate, and enforce behavioral expectations for all students; provide feedback for positive behaviors; determine if they use biased or unnecessary punishment; mitigate and respond to problem behaviors; and improve interactions among students and staff.
- » **PBIS positively impacts student behavior and saves resources.** Research shows that PBIS, when implemented with fidelity, leads to decreases in classroom disruption, fewer violent incidents, drops in suspension rates, increased teacher instructional time, improved academic outcomes, and fewer referrals to mental health and other services.^{4,10} While implementing PBIS at just one tier will have limited positive effects, full PBIS application across tiers magnifies successful outcomes: students who receive higher tier services also benefit from lower tier services. Over time, these students are less likely to require more resource-intensive, higher-tier interventions.
- » **PBIS changes the school climate.** By implementing prevention interventions at multiple levels and executing systemic changes, PBIS has a positive overall impact on school climate. For instance, PBIS has been shown to lead to an increased sense of school safety among students, teachers, and staff.⁷ These outcomes are most dramatic for schools that comprehensively implement PBIS.

PBIS and Safe Schools/Healthy Students

The federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Initiative addresses the underlying factors that contribute to school violence, student substance abuse and mental health problems, school failure, dropout, and suspension and expulsion. The National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention (National Center) provides training and technical assistance to SS/HS communities as they form collaborations to assess school and community needs and resources, implement evidence-based interventions, make data-driven decisions, evaluate their efforts, and ensure sustainability.

With its focus on improving student outcomes and school climate, PBIS is a natural fit for SS/HS communities. Indeed, **many SS/HS grantees have achieved significant, positive results by adopting PBIS.** To better understand the factors that contribute to successful adoption of the PBIS framework, National Center staff conducted brief, informal interviews with seven SS/HS sites implementing PBIS. This report summarizes their successes and learnings. While the implementation of PBIS varies according to each community's needs and resources, the seven sites we interviewed employ several common tactics and strategies for planning, implementing, and refining PBIS:

Establishing strong leadership. Top-level leadership from the superintendent and principals can make PBIS a priority, helping staff understand PBIS's importance and ensuring that resources are allocated for staff PBIS training. Several SS/HS sites credited a strong leader in the district (e.g., a PBIS coach or administrator) with the initiative's success. These champions had the credibility, passion, and experience to support the implementation process and provide needed guidance to school staff.

We constantly reinforced that taking the time to focus on discipline and support positive behaviors does pay off in the end academically.

— Jenée Littrell, SS/HS project director,
Grossmont Union High School District

Planning for schoolwide and districtwide support. Implementing PBIS requires substantial time and resources. All school staff—teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, coaches, custodians, and bus drivers—must be trained to implement PBIS consistently. This requires ongoing collaboration, use of a common PBIS messaging and language (e.g., “be safe, be respectful, be responsible”), and a shared approach to implementation. Early positive results at individual schools can help pave the way for eventual districtwide implementation.

Making data-driven decisions. PBIS relies heavily on the use of data to determine problem areas, track practices, and improve disciplinary outcomes. Schools must determine how best to gather, enter, and report data, with some districts discovering they need to modify existing data systems to access needed data. Effective use of data can help build the case for PBIS, drive same-day decision-making about allocating resources, and demonstrate how PBIS is reducing disciplinary referrals and improving school climate.

Using Databases to Support PBIS

Many schools use data systems to track the progress of PBIS and inform implementation. These data systems (e.g., the Schoolwide Information System, or “SWIS”) track outcomes such as disciplinary referrals, locations and times of behavioral incidents, and interventions delivered. This information helps PBIS teams identify common locations and times of problem behaviors and to identify gaps in services, thus contributing to realistic, data-driven decision-making.

Tailoring PBIS to local strengths and needs. PBIS implementation requires a careful balance of fidelity and adaptation. Its messages may be tailored for individual schools, different age groups, and different settings within the school. The adaptability of PBIS also allows for innovation. Sites that have modified PBIS for use in alternative high schools or for students with special needs see a profound impact on students who have never before received positive recognition at school. Local-level adaptations also enable schools to integrate PBIS with other programming, including alcohol and other drug prevention and social-emotional learning programs.

Involving partners and community stakeholders. Building on SS/HS partnerships, grantees implementing PBIS have trained parents and youth-serving professionals to reinforce PBIS messages with students outside of school. Partnerships between schools and other community organizations can also bolster PBIS by providing wraparound services for youth in need.

Site Examples

The following section illustrates how seven SS/HS sites have implemented PBIS. These seven sites were funded in the 2007, 2008, and 2009 fiscal year (FY) cohorts. The examples focus on each site’s innovative approach to PBIS.

Alton Community Unit School District—Alton, Illinois (FY 2009)

SS/HS funding at Alton Community Unit School District (ACUSD) facilitated the full integration of the multiple tiers of PBIS service and innovative programming to address the needs of diverse populations.

Strengthening Tiers of Service. ACUSD was the first in Illinois to implement PBIS districtwide, beginning with universal level implementation to establish schoolwide expectations. This was facilitated by the active engagement of the superintendent and other administrators. A 2006 statewide PBIS Network pilot program prompted the district to recognize that a disproportionate share of its resources was being dedicated to students experiencing significant risk factors. SS/HS Project Director Sandy Crawford reflects, “We realized we had too many kids in tertiary and that we needed to address behaviors before they reached that level. We needed to be more intentional about targeting kids earlier.”

The ACUSD PBIS initiative now delivers a spectrum of prevention services with school-based prevention teams. Each school has a *universal PBIS team* to develop and refine schoolwide expectations; a *secondary PBIS team* that makes data-driven decisions about students who need targeted interventions; and *tertiary-level interventions* coordinated by school social workers for students who need wraparound services and family-centered supports. Teams track students who receive Tier 2 and 3 services at both the school and district levels to monitor the effectiveness of PBIS interventions. SS/HS support for team coaches and its emphasis on districtwide planning have enhanced schoolwide PBIS integration.

Creating Innovative Programming to Address Unique Needs. When data from the district showed that many students were experiencing behavioral and academic challenges in ninth grade, ACUSD responded by creating a targeted intervention. ACUSD’s SS/HS-funded student assistance coordinator, working as part of the secondary PBIS team, developed a Principles of Communication course, which teaches academic and social skills to at-risk freshman by engaging them in restorative justice circles, journaling, and a motivational and personal life planning program. Since implementing the course, **the district has experienced a significant drop in disciplinary issues among participating students.**

SS/HS has also supported staffing for ACUSD’s Check-in/Check-out program for high school students who are having difficulty meeting schoolwide expectations. Participating students check in each morning with an adult, and throughout the day, their teachers fill in a progress report indicating whether the students met their behavioral expectations (e.g., arriving to class on time). At the end of the day, the students check out to receive affirmation for having met their goals or to determine a plan for improvement. This efficient, positive strategy provides students in need with additional adult support.

There are so many competing initiatives in schools. For PBIS to work and become part of the system, you have to look at integrating the initiatives as much as possible.

—Sandy Crawford, SS/HS project director

SS/HS’s comprehensive approach to prevention helped ACUSD more fully integrate its PBIS framework within the district’s ongoing prevention work. The framework’s tiered prevention approach incorporates a range of initiatives such as restorative justice practices and wraparound services to serve the multifaceted needs of ACUSD’s diverse population.

Escondido Union School District—Escondido, California (FY 2009)

Escondido Union School District (EUSD) focused on creating buy-in, preparing for districtwide implementation, and aligning existing interventions and programs under the PBIS framework.

Creating Buy-In. The EUSD SS/HS team conducted an assessment of the district’s school culture, which revealed that the schools had numerous Tier 2 and 3 services available to students, but few proactive, preventative Tier 1 services. The SS/HS team selected PBIS as a way **to shift the schools’ culture through establishing positive behavioral supports, addressing the problems underlying students’ behavioral issues, and reducing the number of students who need higher-level services.**

As a first step, the SS/HS team held discussions with teachers, and learned that many teachers believed that children should come to school knowing how to behave appropriately. To counterbalance this view and raise awareness about PBIS, the team educated administrators about how they could influence students’ behavior, utilize evidence-based disciplinary practices, and make data-driven decisions. They framed PBIS as the natural fit to shift the district’s focus from *reactive* to *proactive* and as the next logical step to achieve their SS/HS vision.

Implementing PBIS Districtwide. Although only 13 of EUSD’s 23 schools were involved in SS/HS, the district decided to implement PBIS in all the schools. Since many students transfer among EUSD’s schools, EUSD recognized that consistency across the district would best serve its youth. Therefore, all schools share a universal PBIS language and common expectations and norms. “PBIS is great when it is done by a school,” says SS/HS Project Director Kimberly Israel, “but it is just more meaningful when it is done across the board in a district. It is systems changing. It is doing business differently.”

Kids may enter our schools and our classrooms without understanding what appropriate school behavior is. We need to take the time to educate them. We need to do it every year, and we need to do it all of the time in order to create positive changes.

—Kimberly Israel, SS/HS project director

To ensure systemic reform, EUSD developed data collection systems, coached school PBIS teams, provided funding for districtwide rollout, and offered intensive PBIS training. They also worked with individual schools to **enable each school to develop behavioral expectations and plans to fit its population, giving schools autonomy and responsibility for how they implemented PBIS.**

Aligning PBIS with Existing Interventions. EUSD **undertook major efforts to embed the PBIS framework within existing interventions and programs.** The district (1) infused PBIS language into its bullying prevention and alcohol, tobacco, and other drug prevention programs; (2) integrated PBIS language into other district grants, including the Safe Routes to Schools Program; and (3) made a concerted effort to diffuse the PBIS philosophy, language, and values across the community. After just two months of implementation, school staff report improved school climates, and teachers say they feel more confident addressing behavioral challenges.

Fond du Lac School District—Fond du Lac, Wisconsin (FY 2008)

Fond du Lac School District (FDLSD) was one of the first in Wisconsin to implement PBIS. Its strategic planning and implementation process resulted in PBIS becoming integrated in every school in the district and in the community's child-serving agencies, creating wide-ranging positive outcomes.

Building Multilevel Support. FDLSD's strategic rollout of PBIS, as part of their Response to Intervention Model, **enhanced engagement among staff, parents, and high-level administrators.** The district piloted PBIS at four elementary schools, selected based on their readiness and need. The pilot test helped to identify how PBIS needed to be adapted to fit the community and "prepared the soil" to implement PBIS in additional schools.

FDLSD trained school-based PBIS teams in-house (rather than sending them to distant trainings). This approach contributed to a sense of ownership among staff and parents, created opportunities for PBIS trainers to capture the attention of administrators, and allowed trainers to integrate PBIS into the school. At the start, SS/HS Project Administrator Marian Sheridan focused on educating administrators about PBIS and its benefits, gaining their support for districtwide implementation. "Implement PBIS as it is intended to be. Don't take shortcuts. Follow the prescription," advises Joyce Gau, FDLSD's PBIS external coach. "Slow and steady gets you to where you need to be."

Leveraging Partnerships. FDLSD trained SS/HS community collaborators—including staff from the county's department of social services, offices of juvenile justice, Boys and Girls Club, and new partners such as a local children's museum—on PBIS's guiding principles to ensure that **consistent messages about behavioral expectations extended to out-of-school settings.**

Innovating for Success. FDLSD forged the way for other Wisconsin schools to adopt PBIS, contributing best practices and lessons learned as they adapted and implemented the framework. In 2012, nine of FDLSD's schools were recognized as "Schools of Merit" by Wisconsin's PBIS Network for meeting measures of fidelity and quality and producing effective outcomes.

PBIS is not just a school program. These are our children; they are the community's children. When we have children who are socially, emotionally, behaviorally healthier, they are going to be healthier citizens.

—Marian Sheridan, SS/HS project administrator

FDLSD is now implementing PBIS in all of its schools. Particularly impressive are the results from the community's high school, which introduced PBIS in the 2010–2011 school year. Implementing PBIS in high schools presents unique challenges and requires substantial time and resources, but Ms. Sheridan explains that **PBIS has been successful at the high school because of strong support from the staff and principal.** Longitudinal data on disciplinary referrals for incoming freshman, who were exposed to PBIS in middle school and now in high school, highlight PBIS's positive impact, most notably increases in time for students to learn, teachers to teach, and administrators to serve as school leaders.

Freshmen Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) & Time Gained, First 2 Months of School Year

Year	ODRs	Time Gained		
		Administrator	Staff	Students
2010–2011 (baseline)	178	—	—	—
2011–2012 (after 1 year PBIS)	53	20.83 Hours	10.42 Hours	41.67 Hours
2012–2013 (after 2 years PBIS)	27	4.33 Hours	2.17 Hours	8.67 Hours
Total (by staff type)	—	25.16 Hours (4.19 Days)*	12.59 Hours (2.10 Days)	50.34 Hours (8.39 Days)

Time calculations based on Benefit Analysis chart found at http://www.wisconsinpbisnetwork.org/coaches/getting-started/benefits_costs.html

*Days based on a 6-hour school day.

Grossmont Union High School District—La Mesa, California (FY 2007)

Grossmont Union High School District (GUHSD) adopted PBIS to fill gaps in its school discipline policies and universal supports. The district's approach to implementing PBIS has improved student outcomes and created a more positive school climate.

Building Schoolwide Support with Data. The district's SS/HS initiative provided a catalyst for GUHSD administrators to reflect on data on its disciplinary policies and student supports. The data showed the following: disciplinary policies were biased, a small number of teachers made most of the disciplinary referrals, and disciplinary sanctions did not improve student behavior. The data helped administrators to articulate the district's disciplinary problems and build readiness to adopt PBIS.

To gain staff support, administrators **consistently focused on redefining discipline and supporting positive behaviors, and reinforced PBIS's academic payoffs.** Positive results, such as improved test scores, secured staff support. Today, PBIS is part of the schools' culture: Teachers and other school staff share best practices, and there is synergy among schools.

Adapting PBIS to Meet Existing Needs. GUHSD chose PBIS to spark needed changes because it can be implemented at the high school level. GUHSD's **high school teams adapted PBIS to meet the needs of their setting.** One high school has adopted a schoolwide model where everyone is exposed to the same messages in the same words. Another encourages teachers to create behavioral norms for their classrooms. Notwithstanding their different approaches, both schools use data to keep abreast of students' needs and are enjoying positive results. "All schools need to adapt PBIS, make it fit to them," SS/HS Project Director Jenée Littrell states. "Implement with fidelity, but use whatever is appropriate for your culture."

Schools had to look in the mirror and have a conversation about who the school was failing. We made it safe for them to have that candid conversation. It is no one's fault that we are here, but it is our fault if we do not do anything about it now that we know.

—Jenée Littrell, SS/HS project director

Serving High-Need Students. In reviewing their data, GUHSD staff also learned that some at-risk students were falling through the cracks. **GUHSD can now reach these at-risk students with Tier 1 and 2 components before negative behavior escalates.** For instance, one school transformed the in-school suspension room into the "Reflection Room," where students reflect on inappropriate behavior, work with staff to determine the root cause, and decide how to address the problem. Ms. Littrell feels that "the immediacy and the feedback is really the part that is making a big difference." Data support these activities. In the fall of 2011, the school had 280 discipline referrals, but in the fall of 2012, that number was just 110.

Hot Springs School District—Hot Springs, Arkansas (FY 2008)

Hot Springs School District (HSSD) built support for its PBIS initiative by informing stakeholders about how the program was being implemented and using data to communicate early successes. Once considerable districtwide support was evident, HSSD formed strong onsite teams to support PBIS.

Strategically Planning for Implementation. Before implementing PBIS, HSSD networked with other SS/HS sites for guidance on PBIS training and implementation. Once the district identified resources, HSSD trained administrators, counselors, and lead teachers from across the district in PBIS and planned for implementation. SS/HS partners from faith-based organizations, the police department, juvenile court, and mental health and human service agencies agreed to provide services to high-risk students as part of PBIS implementation.

The district selected an elementary school and a middle school as pilot sites because both had administrators who were enthusiastic about implementing PBIS. The pilots were successful. For example, the middle school saw improved behavioral outcomes for students, and staff said they felt more unified and empowered to create positive change. The district **documented early successes with data and testimonials, and communicated these outcomes to build morale and gain support for expanded implementation.**

HSSD staff shared evidence of PBIS's outcomes (e.g., academic and behavioral progress and cost savings) with the superintendent. Impressed by the data, the superintendent agreed to adopt the PBIS messages "be safe, be responsible, be respectful" throughout the district. As former SS/HS Project Director Terry Lawler describes, "We had arrived because the district superintendent was onboard." PBIS supporters in the district learned about the pivotal role that data could play in building support and driving decisions to create change.

You have to have a PBIS coach who is trained, understands PBIS, drives it, believes it, is passionate about it, and makes it work in that school.

— Terry Lawler, former SS/HS project director

Assembling a PBIS Team. District staff have found that careful data analysis has helped them to understand students' behavioral challenges and identify appropriate interventions. To meet students' diverse needs, HSSD employs staff to provide interventions across the prevention continuum. At the universal level, community members serve as "watchdogs" who work in hallways and on school grounds, monitoring behavior and administering rewards as part of the district's reinforcement system. At the Tier 2 level, "mentors" provide adult supervision and encouragement for students identified as needing additional support. Site-level PBIS coaches administer staff meetings, support teachers, and coordinate PBIS efforts at individual schools. PBIS coaches also work in tandem with the HSSD SS/HS intervention specialist and will help sustain PBIS after SS/HS funding ends. Because the district has found that **the key to a coach's success is support from an administrator**, school leaders focus on identifying staff who will make effective coaches and ensuring that they have sufficient time to fulfill the role.

Kershaw County School District—Camden, South Carolina (FY 2009)

Upon receiving SS/HS funding, Kershaw County School District (KCSD) expanded its existing PBIS initiative to additional schools, replicating positive outcomes by engaging leaders and stakeholders and adapting the model for additional populations and settings.

Prioritizing Leadership. SS/HS funding enabled KCSD to expand its PBIS initiative from 5 to 11 elementary schools. SS/HS Project Director Kevin Rhodes hired Kathleen C. Brand as the PBIS lead. With 28 years of classroom and curriculum coaching experience, Ms. Brand gave the project “instant credibility” in the district. Her role has been to **champion PBIS across the district, working with schools to create PBIS teams, coordinating trainings and assessments, and problem-solving solutions to challenges.**

Tailoring PBIS. Once PBIS was established in all of KCSD’s elementary schools, Ms. Brand supported the district’s four middle schools and an alternative school to adopt the initiative. While all schools employ the same PBIS framework, they adapt specific components to fit their school culture. One elementary school, for example, incorporated their existing rules and expectations into the PBIS framework. Similarly, middle schools are experimenting with PBIS rewards that are popular with students (e.g., using iPods or cell phones during free time).

If you drive it too hard from the district level, it's not a school priority, and schools won't own it. Schools have to own PBIS if it's going to work.

– Kathy Brand, PBIS lead

Implementing PBIS at the district’s alternative middle/high school presented unique challenges, as the students span a broad range of ages and have complex needs. The school successfully adapted PBIS for this population, focusing on celebrating students’ “small victories.” For example, for some students, having their name displayed on the marquis in front of the school as a reward was **the first time they had been recognized at school in a positive way.**

Communicating with Stakeholders. Ms. Brand regularly communicates with school administrators, staff, and community members about PBIS and its outcomes. Most schools have created a customized PBIS brochure that informs parents what PBIS is, how it looks in their school, and how they can use PBIS principles at home. Ms. Brand also disseminates a PBIS newsletter for school staff that includes information on upcoming trainings, PBIS tips, and spotlights one school’s PBIS activities.

Collecting and communicating data is also important to KCSD’s PBIS efforts. Ms. Brand posts evaluation data on the school’s internal website, and sends data directly to high-level administrators to demonstrate PBIS’s impact. For instance, **data from the first 30 days of school reveal a 41 percent decrease of in-school and out-of-school suspensions for middle school students compared to the previous year, along with a 30 percent decrease in overall office referrals districtwide.**

Pueblo City Schools—Pueblo, Colorado (FY 2008)

Pueblo City Schools (PCS) laid the foundation for PBIS by prioritizing data-driven decision-making. Buy-in from top level leaders and PBIS coaches in each school helped to integrate PBIS into PCS's culture.

Making Data-Driven Decisions. PCS's PBIS Specialist Jason Cellan recognized that the district's existing database and reporting systems did not meet PBIS implementation needs. Mr. Cellan worked with district data staff to develop a customizable database that summarizes and analyzes student data at the individual, school, and district levels. PCS also adopted a visualization software that maps behavioral data and compares it with other school data sets to identify correlates, patterns, and trends.

School-based PBIS teams receive customized reports that allow them to identify problems as well as appropriate interventions. For example, noticing a spike in disciplinary referrals at lunchtime, a PCS elementary school moved recess to before lunch so students could expend energy before sitting down in the cafeteria and added more lunch periods to reduce the number of children in the cafeteria at one time. These changes led to a dramatic reduction in disciplinary referrals.

The data piece is a critical framework for the whole PBIS effort. Getting that software into place allowed us to propel forward with the work that needed to get done.

– Randy Evetts, SS/HS project director

Pueblo also uses its data system to track results. For example, data have shown that in schools that have heavily invested in PBIS, **office referrals have decreased by 34 percent, translating to substantial increases in student time in the classroom and decreases in administrator time spent on discipline.**

Securing Leadership. From the beginning, PBIS has had strong support from PCS principals. Mr. Cellan attributes this support to (1) a solid data system for collecting and summarizing information, (2) allowing schools to customize PBIS elements, (3) accessible coaching support, and (4) streamlining initiatives to reduce redundancy. SS/HS Project Director Randy Evetts emphasizes the importance of leadership: "The principal has to buy into it, make it a priority, and allow time for the team to meet. Leadership is critical." Even principals who were initially reluctant to adopt PBIS, Mr. Evetts reports, now can't imagine their school without it. At the district level, **support grows as administrators observe positive results from PBIS.**

Building Coaching Capacity. Coaching has been key to embedding PBIS into the culture of PCS schools and building capacity. PCS hired a PBIS coordinator and two coaches to help PBIS teams understand how to operationalize PBIS in their schools. Coaches visit schools regularly to help staff identify and coordinate next steps, troubleshoot challenges, and adapt PBIS to their school culture. The coaches share their knowledge and skills, building capacity among school staff, and helping to make PBIS self-sustaining in PCS schools.



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